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'Akshi' is best Kannada film; rich pickings for South cinema at National Film Awards

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

IN a year heavily dominated by Hindi movies, it was a huge haul for South Indian cinema in all the major categories, with more than 15 films from the region being recognised at the 67th National Film Awards that were announced in New Delhi on Monday. While Malayalam cinema led the pack with seven wins, Tamil cinema followed closely with six, Telugu with three, and Kannada with one.

The awards ceremony was scheduled to be held in May 2020, but had to be postponed owing to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Kannada stunt choreographer Vikram Mor won the National award for Best Action Direction for the fantasy-adventure *Avane Srimannarayana*. The Best Kannada Film award went to *Akshi*, while in the non-feature film category, the Best Exploration Film award went to *Wild Karnataka*.

The Malayalam epic, *Marakkar: Arabikadalinte Simham* (Malayalam), which is awaiting release, and the Telugu action drama *Maharshi* won the big two awards: Best Film and Best Popular Film, with the latter also winning for Raju Sundaram his second National Award for Best Choreography. *Jersey*, which was awarded the Best Telugu Film, also bagged the Best Editor award for *Naveen Nooli*. The film is a heart-rending take on the life of a failed cricketer who yearns to retain the respect of his son.

In the acting categories, Dhanush's turn in Vetrimaaran's *Asuran*, as an oppressed elderly man, fighting for his family in a caste-afflicted society, won him his second National Award for Best Actor (following his first for *Aadukalam* by the same director). This is an award he will share with Manoj Bajpayee (*Bhonsle*), who has won a National Award for the third time in his career, with both of his previous wins coming for a supporting act. Bajpayee's masterful performance in Devashish Makhija's bitingly political film, stands testament to the adage that less is more.

Vijay Sethupathi won his first National Award for *Super Deluxe* for his supporting act as a helpless transgender woman called Shilpa, who grapples with humiliation and guilt. It was a first for Tamil composer Imman, too, as he won the Best Music Director award for his work in Ajith-starrer *Viswasam*.

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CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARWAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Karnataka has vaccine doses enough for only 4 more days

Health Minister assures more stocks arriving soon, to help those in line for 2nd shot

CHETANA BELAGERE @ Bengaluru

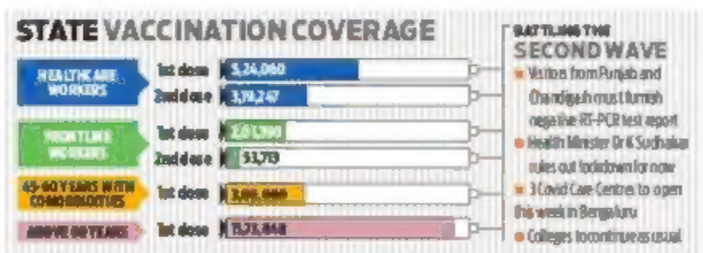
KARNATAKA has vaccine stocks that will suffice only for the next four days, according to highly placed sources in the Department of Health and Family Welfare. While on the one hand, experts are suggesting speeding up the vaccination rollout to ensure that the impact of the second wave is minimised in the state, on the other, the Central Government has reportedly asked the state to wait for another two weeks for the vaccines to reach.

"In our stockpile, we have vaccines (mainly Covishield) which can suffice only for the next four days. But this won't affect any vaccine rollout programmes. We have asked for fresh stock and it will arrive soon," said an official from the Health Ministry on condition of anonymity.

Health and Medical Education Minister Dr K Sudhakar told TNIE, "We are in talks with the Central Government for more vaccines. We are expecting the vaccines to arrive soon. There is no reason to be worried."

Karnataka has so far vaccinated 11,73,848 beneficiaries aged above 60 and 3,09,660 beneficiaries aged above 45 with certain comorbidities with the first dose. Many are now awaiting their second dose, which will be administered from April 1. Fortunately for those awaiting the second dose, the shortage in vaccine stocks comes at a time when the Union Health Ministry, based on scientific evidence, declared that the efficacy of Covishield is higher if the second dose is taken after six to eight weeks. With this, doctors now feel that the vaccines may reach the state in time for people to take their second dose.

"However, if there is any kind of shortage, it needs to be rectified as it will slow down the vaccination process, which is not a good thing to happen at a time when the second wave is in on and cases are increasing in the state," said a senior doctor from a government hospital. P5

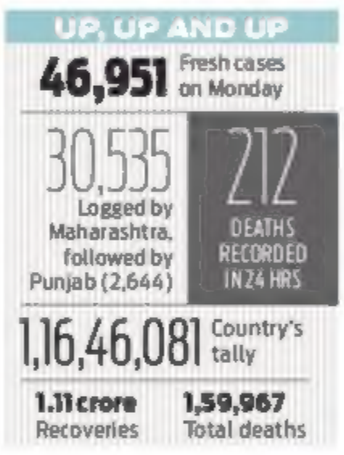

STATE VACCINATION COVERAGE
HEALTHCARE WORKERS
1st dose 9,24,060
2nd dose 3,98,247
FRONTLINE WORKERS
1st dose 2,01,390
2nd dose 53,751
45-60 YEARS WITH COMORBIDITIES
1st dose 3,09,660
ABOVE 60 YEARS
1st dose 11,73,848
BATTLING THE SECOND WAVE
Visitors from Punjab and Chandigarh must furnish negative RT-PCR test report
Health Minister Dr K Sudhakar rules out lockdown for now
3 Covid Care Centres to open this week in Bengaluru
Colleges to continue as usual

Second Covishield shot in 6-8 weeks better, says Centre

SUMI SUKANYA DUTTA @ New Delhi

IF you are waiting for your second jab of the Covid-19 vaccine Covishield, you'll be better protected if you take it between the sixth and eighth weeks of the first shot, and not after four-six weeks as is the practice now. That has been the international consensus, and expert panels back home have now aligned themselves with that view.

Based on the recommendations of the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunization and subsequently by National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for Covid-19 vaccine, the Centre on Monday directed all states to increase the interval between two doses of Covishield. In fact, scientific evidence from some countries shows that while the vaccine is about 60-65% effective at a gap of four weeks, it can be up to 90% effective against infection when administered at an interval of 12 weeks. But India's expert panels chose a more conservative gap of eight weeks. P9


UP, UP AND UP
46,951 Fresh cases on Monday
30,535 Logged by Maharashtra, followed by Punjab (2,644)
212 DEATHS RECORDED IN 24 HRS
1,16,46,081 Country's tally
1.11 crore Recoveries
1,59,967 Total deaths

ADDING STRENGTH

TWO MORE JUDGES APPOINTED TO K'TAKA HIGH COURT

YATHIRAJU @ Bengaluru

FOR a long time, the Karnataka High Court had only one woman judge and their number saw a gradual rise only in recent years. With the appointment of Sushree Khazi Jayabunnisa Mohiuddin, the Karnataka High Court now has six women judges.

On Monday, the President appointed Rajendra Badamikar and Sushree Khazi Jayabunnisa Mohiuddin, as Additional Judges of the Karnataka High Court. A notification to this effect was issued by the Ministry of Law and Justice, elevating the two judicial officers as judges.

Rajendra Badamikar is presently working as Registrar General whereas Jayabunnisa Mohiuddin is working as Registrar (Vigilance) at the Principal Bench of the High Court at Bengaluru.

The Supreme Court Collegium, on February 4, approved the elevation of the two judicial officers as judges of the Karnataka High Court, along with a senior advocate.

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Pawar poses timeline query to back minister

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Mumbai

Sharad Pawar

Anil Deshmukh

A day after NCP chief Sharad Pawar said former Mumbai Police commissioner Parambir Singh's allegations of extortion against state Home Minister Anil Deshmukh were serious, he sought to question the timeline mentioned in Singh's recent 'letter bomb' while stoutly defending his minister.

While Singh's letter says the now arrested assistant inspector Sachin Waze was called by Deshmukh to his official residence "in and around mid-February and thereafter" to instruct him on extorting ₹100 crore per month, Pawar argued it was incorrect as the minister was hospitalised from February 5 to 15 after testing positive for Covid-19. "After discharge, Deshmukh was in home quarantine for the next 10 days in Nagpur. There is no way Waze could have met him in Mumbai then," Pawar said. Though the Opposition sought to puncture the argument, claiming Deshmukh had addressed the press on February 15, the latter quickly clarified that he had just returned home from hospital and taken a few quick questions that day.

Pawar said the focus should be actually be on the bomb scare at Antilia. The ATS on Sunday had claimed to have made a breakthrough in businessman Mansukh Hiren's murder with the arrest of two persons, including a former policeman. The ATS on Monday arrested a Gujarat man for providing 14 SIM cards to the two accused. Parambir Singh moved the Supreme Court on Monday, seeking a CBI probe into "malpractices" of Deshmukh. P10

Mop-up of fuel tax 45% more in 10 months than full FY20

JONATHAN ANANDA @ New Delhi

IF there were any doubts left over whether fuel taxes have become the government's prized cash cow, the Finance Ministry's reply to the Lok Sabha on Monday serves to quash most of them.

Not only have excise duty collections on petrol, diesel, and natural gas surged, the share of such taxes in India's gross tax revenue has spiked sharply over the years too, indicating a steadily increasing dependence on fuel tax revenues.

According to figures submitted to the Lok Sabha by the Finance Ministry, excise duty collections from fuel and natural gas in the first 10 months of this financial year (FY21) are already 45% higher than collections recorded during the whole of FY20. Between April 2020 and January 2021, this figure stood at ₹2.94 lakh crore against just ₹2,03,010 lakh crore in FY20. Collections made in the first 10 months of this fiscal year are also over five times (456%) larger than the ₹53,090 crore recorded in FY14. P13

EXPRESS READ

Parl passes Bill to up private spend in mining

NEW DELHI: Parliament on Monday passed the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2021, which seeks to bring more reforms in the mining sector for boosting private investment and creating more jobs.

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